

Mark 9:33-50 Who is this man? Servant of All – Part 2)

1. Fake Faith vs. Genuine Faith

In a Gallup poll conducted in America, the question was asked – do you believe in God?

Back in 1944 – 96% of people surveyed said yes, with only 1% saying no. 2% gave no opinion.

Jump to 2014 – 86% said yes, 11% said no, and 3% gave no opinion.

When asked the broad question – do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?

In 2013, 59% said yes, and 41% said no.

When asked the question – how often do you attend church or synagogue – at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom or never

In 2013 – 27% said at least once a week, 10% said almost every week, 13% said once a month, and seldom/never category was 47% combined.

There's a huge difference between saying you believe in God, and put it into practice.

There's a huge difference between saying that you're a member of a church,
and actually attending church.

As we've been reading through the book of James – genuine faith necessarily leads to action.
And the opposite is true too – fake faith necessarily leads to inaction.

In this next segment of Mark's gospel, as Jesus continues on his mission,
As Jesus heads to his inevitable death in Jerusalem,

There are two distinct groups of people that fall into the category of fake faith and genuine faith.
But these two distinct groups of people are the total opposite of what we should expect.
Before we get to the two distinct groups before Jesus...

What exactly is it that distinguishes fake faith from genuine faith?

What is the litmus test that separates the fake from the genuine article?

2. The Practice of Faith: Exclusion vs. Identification (vv. 38-42)

The answer is this. The practice of faith separates genuine faith from fake faith.

The practice of faith is this:

Fake faith excludes others who have genuine faith,
but genuine faith identifies with others who have genuine faith.

This first section is dripping with irony.

The disciples failed at exorcism because of their lack of faith.
However, This unidentified 'somoene' succeeds because he trusts Jesus.

The disciples rebuke him for "he was not following us"
and yet obviously the man was better follower of Jesus than the disciples were.

The disciples show the fakeness, the shallowness of their faith
because they exclude this man who has actually has genuine faith.

However genuine faith identifies genuine faith.
Jesus identifies this man, and says – 'do not stop him'

Even more, Jesus clarifies how genuine faith responds to genuine faith –

"⁴¹For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward."

After the cross this teaching is vital.

The practice of fake faith is to exclude genuine faith.
The practice of genuine faith is to identify with those of genuine faith.

3. The Consequence of Faith: Hell vs. Heaven (vv. 43-50)

And so, Jesus turns his attention to the consequence of faith.

And there is an immediate consequence and an ultimate consequence of faith.

Genuine faith has the immediate consequence of the removal of sin,

Genuine faith has the ultimate consequence of entrance into heaven, or kingdom of God.

Whereas, fake faith has the immediate consequence of holding onto sin,

Furthermore, fake faith has the ultimate consequence of being thrown into hell.

So here, in the second section, we have the hand, the foot and the eye – as vehicles for sin.

And we have the consequences played out here.

Genuine faith means the immediate consequence of chopping off your hand,

Cutting off your foot,

And gouging out your eye.

For it is better to be a one-handed, one footed, one-eyed saint in heaven,
Than to be able bodied in hell.

On the other hand, Fake faith will mean that you do not remove sin,

And therefore have all your body parts in hell.

Jesus is saying here that the gravity of sin in our lives is so great,

That it is worth ending parts of your physical life, in order to preserve your eternal life.

And I think we're too comfortable with the eye, foot, hand metaphor

to really grasp the shocking nature of what Jesus is saying.

But if I said,

If you struggle with sexual temptation on the internet,

If you struggle with sexual sin, then it would be better to castrate yourself,

Than to be thrown into hell.

We start to comprehend the gravity of sin.

And if I said,

If you use your tongue to manipulate others,

If you use your tongue for power games, for salacious gossip, for control,

Then it would be better to cut your tongue out,

Than to be thrown into the unquenchable fire.

And if I said,

If your credit card causes you to sin,

If your appetite for the thrill of the new purchase,

The latest gadget, the coolest toy, the next fashion

Then chop up the credit, cut up the new purchase, smash the toy,
For it would be better for all these things to be smashed,
Than to be thrown into the pits of hell.

We're starting to get a handle on the revolutionary nature of Jesus' teaching.

Genuine Faith has the immediate consequence of removing sin.
And Genuine Faith has the ultimate consequence of entering the kingdom of heaven.

The seriousness and gravity of sin is so great Jesus will give up his own life for it.

And so the question for us is,
Is our faith genuine or is it fake?
And what do our actions demonstrate?

4. Who is this man? Servant of All

Well, Jesus deals with the fake faith of the disciples,
And Jesus describes the characteristics of genuine faith.

The practice of genuine faith is to identify others who have genuine faith.
The practice of fake faith is the exclusion of others who have genuine faith.

The immediate consequence of genuine faith is the removal of sin,
And ultimate consequence of genuine faith is entrance into heaven.

The immediate consequence of fake faith is the acceptance of sin,
And the ultimate consequence of fake faith is being thrown into hell.

The key to understanding fake faith vs. genuine faith,
the epicentre of grasping genuine faith over and above fake faith

is rightly grasping the man who stands at the centre of God's kingdom.

For comprehending the magnitude of the messiah will lead to genuine faith,
Whereas rejecting God's king will lead to fake, superficial faith.

That is, on the one hand, grasping the reality of the Lordship of Jesus
Means that we no longer for ourselves, but for him – in every area of our life.

And on the other, the domestication of Jesus means,
well, surely he didn't mean that, or he didn't say this.
That's not the Jesus that I choose to follow,
And we create Jesus to be the one that we would like to follow, rather than Lord of all.

So how we answer the question, who is this man? Will determine the type of faith we have.

Either he's a moral teacher, an upright man, even a prophet of God, but nothing more,
In whom only a superficial faith, will be the outcome.

Or he is the servant of all,
the one who gave up everything,
the one who become nothing,
the one who redeemed us and therefore will give our lives over to him,
And we worship him with every fibre of being, every aspect of our lives, every thought, word and deed.

For Jesus is both our Saviour and our Lord.

Let's pray.